

IIT-Gandhinagar to now offer humanities

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Adam Halliday

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Posted: Tue Jan 18 2014, 06:32 hrs

Ahmedabad:

Curriculum aims to produce well-rounded students, likely to be introduced in July when fresh academic session begins

AMID concerns about the shortage of well-rounded students passing out from technical institutions, the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) is set to introduce a new curriculum that will devote 25 per cent of academics to humanities.

“We are finalising the curriculum. It will be in place by July when the new academic session begins,” said IIT-Gn Director professor Sudhir Jain. “If I am a mechanical engineer and I am strong in basics, then I will get a chance to learn much more from colleagues and superiors once I start working. But I will never get a chance to learn philosophy or literature unless I learn it in college. We want to offer our students that opportunity.”

The new curriculum will divide academics into four parts – humanities, basic sciences, core subjects and electives. This will be a departure from the curricula in other, older IITs where courses apart from core technical subjects occupy much less weightage in their grade systems.

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“If you talk about going to the moon, an engineer will talk about the technological possibility, a manager will talk about the financial feasibility and a humanities person would talk about the desirability. We want our engineering students to talk about all of these,” said Jain. He said IIT-Gn will organise a “curriculum conclave” to showcase the curriculum to other technical institutes in India.

Jaison Manjaly, an assistant professor of Philosophy at IIT-Gn said students are already taking classes and attending lectures on economics, sociology, literature, history and psychology. The institute is trying to offer other subjects such as political science and cognitive science too, he said.

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Lectures are organised regularly with an approximate 50-50 allotment of engineering and humanities topics. There have also been short, eight-hour courses spread over weekends on innovation, rural development, the Right to Information (RTI) Act and ethics among others that show on the students' grade cards but are not counted as part of their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Manjaly said the new curriculum would institutionalise the thrust on humanities subjects and the students would be required to either take at least one humanities subject carrying six credits every semester, or opt for two half-courses of three credits each.

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